

**GOVERNOR JANET NAPOLITANO**  
**STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**  
**48<sup>TH</sup> ARIZONA LEGISLATURE**  
**SECOND REGULAR SESSION**  
**JANUARY 14, 2008**

*[EXCERPT ON HEALTH CARE]*

We've come a long way in five years. Then, Arizona's health care workforce couldn't keep up with our growth; the cost of prescription drugs was outside the reach of many Arizonans, with little help available. And we were stuck in the age of paper, not maximizing technology to electronically connect patients and providers with medical records.

Now, we have a new medical campus in Phoenix; we have nearly doubled enrollment in programs for registered nurses; and the CoppeRx Card has saved Arizonans millions on prescription drugs. More children than ever get well-child check-ups, and more families can learn about health insurance for their children through KidsCare. And we have received more than 16 million dollars in federal grants because of our leading-edge work in electronic health care systems.

This is good work. Now, we need to do more, because, for too many Arizona families, the doors to health care remain shut. As I've traveled the state, I've heard the same stories again and again: someone loses a job, or they work for a small business that is not able to provide health care. Or, a child in the family has an ongoing health condition that prices insurance way beyond their reach.

It's time to face the facts: families need health care.

Children, in particular, need and deserve a healthy start. KidsCare is an effective program, and we know it works, so let's build on that success. Let's allow families – who are currently shut out of the health care system – to buy health insurance for their children at the parents' cost, with no subsidy from the state's general fund.

For parents fighting for health care for their children, this new program – call it “KidsShare” – would be a viable option. We would begin to open the doors to health care in a way that's fair and responsible.

Next we need to expand the amount of time a child can stay insured.

Children become young adults; and young adults are the fastest-growing group of uninsured in our state. They live lives that involve part-time and entry-level jobs that increasingly don't offer health benefits; they also, way too often, gamble that they will never get sick.

We can't afford that gamble. Small health problems, left unattended, can become big and very expensive conditions the state may have to pay for.

These young people should be able to maintain the health care they've grown up with. I have directed the Department of Administration to find ways for the State Health Insurance plan to allow all young adults – up to the age of 25 – to continue coverage on their parents' insurance, so long as this can be done in a way that is cost-neutral to taxpayers. I ask you to expand this concept to the private insurance market so that more of our young people are insured.

Those who can afford health insurance still need our help. Finding good health care is hard; understanding health care insurance plans can feel like a hopeless pursuit. I ask you to require that insurance companies supply the state with timely, accurate information about their plans, and the sticker prices for their coverage.

The state will then publicize this information in a clear, consumer-friendly way. It seems simple – because it is. And it is also necessary.

For our seniors, we should continue to build on last year's work, and reward the highest-quality nursing home care providers. The state will pay more money to those nursing homes who offer better quality care that leads to their residents having the best health outcomes. My budget will accomplish this, and as a result, we will prevent even more devastating conditions down the road.

Next, we will continue our work to grow Arizona's health care workforce to match our growing population. In my budget, I propose that we triple the state funding for our loan repayment program to recruit physicians, nurse practitioners and dentists to work in underserved areas, such as rural and tribal communities. Again, it will be a cost-neutral action.

Finally, let's continue the work we've begun for our veterans. They served for us; it's our turn to serve for them.

Arizona's more than 600,000 veterans deserve to receive the benefits they have earned. Veterans' Benefits Counselors – who work for the state – are experts in finding those benefits, and connecting them to the military men and women who need them. We will continue to aggressively expand the number of these counselors across all parts of the state. By the end of this year, there will be an Arizona veterans' benefits counselor within an hour's drive of virtually every veteran in our state.

Last year, I met with our state's leaders in health care, and there was remarkable consensus on the ideas that should move us forward: health care should be within the reach of our citizens; Arizona's health care system should be simple and smart; it should promote care that is efficient and effective; and base care decisions on prevention and staying well, rather than merely treating the sick. The proposals I've outlined today further these principles, and move Arizona forward toward an accessible, affordable, and high-quality health care system.

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